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On the Contemporary Mentality Changes of Youth in the GDR
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ON THE CONTEMPORARY MENTALITY CHANGES OF YOUTH IN THE GDR

Everybody can clearly see that we live in a period of radical economical, technological, social, political, mental, and cultural changes. These processes of change are very dynamic. Sometimes they pass through dramatically accelerated stages. The different subparts and components influence each other. Between social orders, regions, single countries, nations and other subunits may be considerable variation or specific moments in the content, causes, and course of changes. We can well observe and comment this phenomenon among the European countries today.

Mental change in human life bears great scientific as well as practical and political importance. Actually, there is a growing interest in the mental development of man, both of the nations and individuals, especially in their mental differences, in the understanding of their particularities, and in the growth and development of their potentials.

Naturally, the mental lives of human beings, their thinking, evaluating and action, their conceptions of life, their life aims and lifestyles always move in the light of history. Generations have always been different in their mental habits. But these processes are far more intensive and massive at our time than they used to be in the past, and thus influence certain structures underlying the personality to a much higher degree.

As social scientists who are concerned with youth we knew that young people or young generations respond particularly sensitive and impulsive and with distinct reactions to any change of their living conditions. Their awareness and behaviour, their life con-

ceptions, social aspirations and lifestyles express the new traits and tendencies more strikingly than those of older people. And it is well known that young people in fact express a large commitment to these new features, to their acceptance and spreading in society.

Youth researchers know these problems in detail, both from their own empirical work and from the comparative literature. They easily prove that (exactly comparable) youth cohorts very significantly differ from each other in many properties (value orientations, interests, abilities, activities, behaviours) at various historical times.

Certainly they can also provide evidence of considerable differences between certain strata and groups of youth, for example of those between the sexes, educational levels, origins, national or confessional groups. International comparative studies often reveal large differences in the consciousness and behaviour of youth from different countries and nations.

Although, it often seems to me as if the deep layers and structural relations of these differences are not sufficiently examined. Many researchers - and I shall by no means exclude myself from doing so - often are still content with comparisons of rather isolated trait complexes (for instance some value orientations, attitudes, etc.), stick to their interpretations based on indicators and do not search enough for the more fundamental dispositions or mental structures. Perhaps they are biased by positivistic ideals or do not know enough about psychology. (But others easily fall into speculations on the "adolescent soul" without

sufficient empirical proof.

I shall like you to consider precisely this problem when I go into mentality and mentality change. But to begin with let us have a look at our knowledge so far: The problem underlying historically determined mentality change in the light of generations or other larger populations/groups has been discussed by some philosophers, historians, art historians, and sociologists since the end of the last century (for example DILTHEY, FLECHOV, GRIGER, PINDER), although this term has not been used.

Youth-sociological thinking has gained much influence on the generational concept by MANNHEIM as we know. MANNHEIM started from the assumption that succeeding generations differ from the preceding ones in their awareness and behaviour, and that "changes occur in mental and psychic attitudes".

This change, he said, is decisively characterized by social argument and experience-making during adolescence, especially during a so-called determinating period around the age of 17. Political, moral, and cultural attitudes/orientations thus formed would be significantly resistant to change and therefore also characteristic of the later adult.

Following MANNHEIM, many sociologists and other researchers published interesting descriptions of youth generations, their mental habitus, and of their specific "generational shape". They identified their changed "mentalities".

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Since the 60s there has been much discussion on a change of values in the Western countries, which is particularly distinct among

younger generations. Since then, numerous empirical inquiries have found strong trends with respect to

- political attitudes and activities
- cultural preferences and behavioural patterns
- leisure estimation, and leisure activities
- attitudes towards the environment and technological development
- work motivation and readiness to learn
- and many other values, needs, interests, convictions and behavioural habits.

No doubt, this is significant, although by no means uncontradictory, and methodically often very heterogeneous empirical material. The underlying theoretical problems catch the eye particularly clearly in the light of the much discussed thesis by INGLEHART on his materialist/postmaterialist value systems. Quite a lot of researchers were fascinated by this simple, seemingly plausible model and followed INGLEHART without any critical analysis of his superficial politico-scientific theoretical position and methods. Not until the early 80s was massive criticism expressed from many sides. Correct verification placed this conception into the realm of Hades.

After an extensive secondary analysis V. JAGODZINSKI judges almost crushingly: "The results/trends hardly could have turned out more unfavourable to the theory of postmaterialism... He who wants to empirically prove the change of values towards postmaterialism must seek to get other data and measuring instruments" (1985, p. 353).

I actually believe that the theoretical conception of value

change should be more considered in its relativity.

Its relativity means the following to me:

- Usually, "classical" value research of sociology only diagnoses the global relations of a sampled population to certain values. It is more a kind of mosaic approach that dominates here. In spite of interesting positive exceptions, the deeper motivation of the relationship to the respective values or fields of values does not gain the attention that would be necessary.

And the endeavour to identify and empirically verify the relationships between values, the value structures, is not clearly enough expressed, either.

- The classical sociologist who works on value research does not sufficiently proceed from the personality, from the psyche of an individual. This leads to an exclusion of some personality dimensions, which often show a strong relevance to action, such as moods, affective relations, deep identifications, certain dispositions of needs, but also images/archetypes, symbols, fears, etc.

Dispositions of action that approximate the unconscious, which cannot much or distinctly be reflected, play hardly any role here, and they are not integrated into theoretical consideration, either.

But persons/populations act on the basis of all these mental structures in their entity, however, and not on the basis of some isolated value orientations. Logically, value research with this personality deficiency is not able of explaining action, activities of persons/populations sufficiently.

- The cognitive dispositions of personality, its abilities, intellectual and social behavioural competences, its intelligence and knowledge largely remain outside the focus of classical value research.

This is another shortage that avoids the agents to be approached and explained in their entity.

- Some researchers and authors give you the impression that they do not make any clear distinction between the "subjective" value orientations existing in the consciousness of individuals and the "objective" values in terms of the social state of affairs.

But doing so leads to mixtures with large theoretical consequences, to inaccurate statements.

Others derive value change processes off-handedly and primarily from the so-called decay of values, the devaluation or revaluation of objective social values.

This may in part be reasonable, but in many cases might processes of value change, among youth for example, be determined in a completely different way. I can imagine that this reductional approach will serve to understand the complex social structures that determine human values and action.

The shortcomings and problems of value research mentioned here should not be interpreted as arrogant reasoning. Generally speaking, value research made large progress over the last decades, and nobody will be able of further developing it en passant. Precisely for this reason is it necessary to clearly underline their relativities and to venture taking steps that will lead

beyond classical value research.

The introduction of the mentality concept is to be conceived as a contribution, as a step forward into this direction. I am well aware of the problems and temporary character inherent in this concept, but at the same time I am convinced of its heuristic, knowledge-stimulating function.

Something about the Mentality Concept

Mentality is to be understood as special psychic structures (that are relatively stable). Mentality comprises those habitual, psychic dispositions that determine the particular experiences (consciousness) and behaviours of human beings, populations, groups, and individuals.

This socio-psychological mentality concept is clearly characterized by its reference to the psychic habitus of special populations, groups, or individuals. It presumes that the specific way of social existence (under concrete conditions of existence in history) always creates a particular psychic habitus of the respective populations, groups and individuals. This habitus is shaped through active arguing (that means through activity, communication, and interaction) of the populations, groups, and individuals with the respective conditions of their concrete existence. Mentalities are acquired or adopted by individuals under the conditions of their everyday-life (of their particular life position) during ontogenesis.

During this process of individual activity and adoption, special psychic dispositions or structures have grown from early child-

hood on. They typically define the thinking, feeling and planning the motivation and everyday lifestyle of individuals or large populations and groups, that is to say, they define their mentalities.

Indeed, the general definition of the mentality concept cannot be put differently. It refers to the special, particular, to the typical differences in the mental lives (that is to say in psychic experiences and behaviours) of populations, groups, and individuals. But it does not merely refer to differences per se, or to random variations, only to those differences, or particularities, however, which are relatively stable and thus characteristic of those persons or groups who determine the socio-psychic habitus (personality type, character).

This general socio-psychological definition will probably be followed yet. But problems grow as we go into detail.

Today the mentality concept in the sense just defined (independently of its technical terms) is preferred to characterize psychic differences between large populations or macrogroups.

It describes mentalities of historical epochs, political, religious movements, of ethnic classes, strata and elites, philosophical or art schools, and, naturally, it also depicts those of outstanding personalities in history. In the science of history, the mentality concept has enjoyed increasing attention since recently, in particular in French historiography (history of mentality, mentality historians).

At present, social sciences are interested in mentality differences or mentality change among macrogroups such as sex groups,

social classes and strata, educational, vocational, ideological or other groups.

The mentality concept seems to be particularly useful to empirical youth research in order to examine the differences between awareness and behaviour, the mental states of affairs between the strata and other socio-demographic positions of youth, but in particular to study mentality trends between cohorts or generations.

Naturally, the biggest problem is the theoretical interpretation and empirical diagnostics of mentalities among large populations.^{x)}

As to this issue I do not know any theoretical or methodological work that might provide differentiated orientations. A researcher hardly finds closed mentality models of macrogroups now, but rather a lot of opinions, interesting descriptions, more or less well-founded hypotheses and theoretical drafts.

The starting point and state of research in the field of youth is relatively advantageous yet. There are many sociological and psychological drafts of theories and a large empirical basis compared with other fields.

Researchers in the field of mentality have to put up with this situation. It is always on the basis of the literature on the subject and of their own insight only that they can take up some

^{x)} In this place I shall not discuss the problems related to the interpretation and diagnostics of mentalities among microgroups, institutions, or single persons. Things are completely different here. Many issues have been treated much better both theoretically and diagnostically (compare personality research and psychodiagnostics).

characteristic mentality fields in hypotheses and test them empirically, thus gaining more precise and valid knowledge.

The mentality concept has a methodological function to them: It reminds them not to dwell on making rough and superficial mosaic-like analyses or reflections, but to search for the essential mental structures which control behaviour, that is to say, for mentality in its entirety. Further, the mentality concept orientates the researcher to examine the relevant socio-cultural causes and developmental conditions of mentalities or mentality change.

Mentality research, in my opinion, includes both theoretical and empirical investigation into major social conditions underlying the existence of the respective population, their actual lifestyles under concrete social and cultural conditions. The focus of the mentality concept is at last to reveal fundamental dispositions and significant correlations, to analyse special psychic structures in their entity, and to understand relevant factors of societal determination within the (active-acting) person-environment dialectics.

The mentality concept thus defined fully corresponds with the approach of historical materialism.

The subject called "mentality" here, that is to say, special psychic (or mental) structures inherent in concrete historical societies, classes, macrogroups, etc., has been studied by philosophers, historians, and other social scientists for a long time. But it has mostly been illustrated using other terms. Literature points out expressions such as "collective consciousness", "mass soul", "societal psychology" (PLECHANOV), "social character",

"social personality type", "mass awareness", "everyday awareness" and "social habitus".

The sociologist Th. GRIGER was among the first scientists to systematically and differentiatedly work on mentalities. He regards mentality as "a mental, soul-specific disposition, which is directly shaped by man through the social world of his life and his... experiences of life made in it" (1932, p. 77).

The large variety of words easily gives the idea that the authors do not reach much agreement in the contents, either. In fact, views often are very heterogenous, different definitions are given and most diverse aspects underlined. This is quite understandable somehow, since historians have other problems or other views on problems than philosophers or even sociologists.

The content-related interpretation of mentalities must always focus on the specific subject.

In spite of that, the fundamental definitions or basic conceptualization urgently requires more congruence. This would certainly stimulate discussion and knowledge increase in the field of mentality research.

The mentality concept could and should gradually become a scientific category. Doing so requires further conceptual work and can only be the result of multilateral including interdisciplinary discussion and cooperation. It should not remain a model word with colloquial ambiguity.

Like in any other country and at any time, deep changes took place in the thinking, values, behaviour, and in the lifestyles and biographies of our youth during the last four decades.

Along with socio-economic, political, and ideological change and growth, and with the cultural, educational and youth policies in socialist society we could always find large mentality differences among growing generations of young people or age cohorts.

Our institute provided much empirical evidence to confirm the contemporary processes of change which occurred in most diverse fields of life and behaviour among youth in the 23 years of its existence. But recently we found that these changes have accelerated and extended and that they finally penetrate into ever deeper psychic structures.

The reason for this is the rapid development of world society at the end of this century, including the particular conditions in our own country the impact of which is to be estimated highly.

Our studies confirm with high congruence significant trends in the following fields of traits and life (which can only be outlined briefly and rather fragmentary here).

- the political and ideological attitude

Events of global policy, in particular processes that take place in the socialist countries have increased the political interest among young people of all strata, but especially among those with higher education and political commitment.

Sensitivity to political events and information, even to the presentation of information has grown. The need for unbiased, objective, non-euphemistic information and discussion, for giving one's own point of view, and for critical dispute and argument has increased. Young people have become more critical, doubting and sceptical. Today it is far less than in the past

that they accept media or expert presentations at the first stroke, only "in good faith". Their own political position and activity has clearly been strengthened. This is very welcome. It supports the fact that a process of political maturation takes place, and that the democratic rights and duties are realized more consciously.

- the environmental attitude

Furthermore, our young people acquired a different attitude to the environment during the last years. The danger of destructing the environment and thus questions associated with the maintenance and protection of the environment are recognized as a global problem by an ever growing number of young people, which every single person has his/her own responsibility for and wants to make his/her contribution to now.

- leisure attitude, leisure activity

The value of leisure has continued to grow in the consciousness of young people. Leisure and leisure activities have increasingly become central life values.

To dispose of much leisure is a factor of prestige highly rated and intensively used by most young people.

Leisure interests and leisure behaviours are characterized by more and more variability. This is attributed, on the one hand, to the growing number of offers, objective possibilities, and more specific life positions, but corresponds, on the other hand, with the increased autonomy, social competence, decisiveness and changeability of the young persons themselves.

The differentiation and individuation of adolescent interests and lifestyles is particularly striking in leisure activities. And further, they seem to have their most important basis of reproduction here. This is also expressed by the fact that many leisure interests and leisure competences were essentially "rejuvenated" during the last ten to twenty years, that is to say, they are already formed and occur in stages of younger age, including childhood.

Cultural and aesthetical standards, preferences, and behaviours go on changing at full speed, especially with respect to music, fashion, media genres and other fields of leisure.

The media use still somewhat extends in time. The offer becomes more and more diverse (the number of channels, of youth-specific programmes or contents, and of the new media increases). Young people have almost unlimited access to and full selective freedom of all the media.

- attitudes to achievement, work, and study

The attitudes towards achievement, work, and study also change. They take more individual and more different forms. This begins early in middle school-age.

The rating of achievement loses its dominant position among a growing number of young people.

The following is typical of the work motivation of many young persons: Ego-peripheral motives, that means orientations focused on society or general/abstract values further diminish, lose motive strength, whereas ego-centred motives come more into the foreground.

Work (work attitude, and work achievement) is rather determined by its meaning and efficiency. Its main point is to be meaningful, useful, and interesting. It is expected to allow higher levels of freedom and to serve one's self-realization.

An increasingly utilitarian attitude towards work and also to learning and studying arises. People more often ask: What will be the impact, use, and meaning of this to me, to my own life? This is a statement and not a negative moral rating. Thus, it seems as if a new type of achievement readiness begins to grow.

- the attitude to the sexual partner and the family

During the 70s and 80s a rather striking change occurred in the partner relations of young people.

Today wooing is usually done in more direct and less complicated ways without any fears of discovery or publicity common among former youth cohorts. First sexual intercourse, on an average, takes place about two years earlier than among the parental generation. Interesting to note is the approximation of male and female cohabitance, girls are no longer "laggards".

The emotional and "moral" evaluations of many erotic, sexual, and partner-specific relations seem to be modified. Premarital sexual intercourse lost all of its taboo character. It is regarded as something completely normal. Similarly, with respect to partner change, a very tolerant attitude has developed, even though many young people rate partner fidelity very highly and wish to behave accordingly in their lives.

Another significant change took also place concerning marriage

and family. Main objective indicators are for example;

- Generally, people wish to have two, more often less, seldom more children. The actual birth rate per parents largely corresponds with the average wish, it amounts to 1.7 today.
- A lot of young people in our country search for lifestyle alternative to marriage.

There was a surprisingly large increase in the number of unmarried couples, cohabitations or so-called marriages without certificate during the last two decades. The forms, developmental paths and causes of these cohabitations cannot be disputed or discussed here.

- The rate of divorce increased very much and seems to continue growing. About 70 per cent of all divorces are proposed by the women.

All these are facts that indicate processes of massive change in the life with a sexual partner and a family. They represent a new mentality, a more independent, unforced, and liberal relationship to the partner. And they express more autonomy and independence, especially among youngwomen and probably a higher sensitivity to violations of the proper ego and of the different needs and interests of the two partners.

- Numerous findings of our research suggest that profound dimensions of the mentality or personality structures underlying our youth have been affected by change recently.

Basic needs undoubtedly are subject to such a dynamic change as well. Inevitably, this has large effects on value orientations, interests, motive dispositions, and primarily on the everyday

behaviour of the respective individuals.

Let me emphasize the following basic needs here:

- the need (or aspiration) for more self-determination or self-realization

I postulate an "axis syndrome" that underlies the mentality change of youth: these are changes in the self-awareness towards feeling an increased self-consciousness, and a clearly growing tendency towards more self-determination and self-realization.

Growth and development of a higher self-consciousness and more self-esteem is expressed as follows in the everyday behaviour of young persons: they lay more emphasis on their self-esteem, their "proper value" and expect more esteem and respect, and a better recognition of their aspirations and personalities. They want to be accepted as equal partners. They show more sensitivity, or more severe reactions to any violation of their own aspirations caused by neglect and smiles, obstinacy, tutelage and an I-shall-never-fail attitude among their communication partners.

The growing tendency towards self-determination finds its expression in a larger striving for autonomy. Young people want even more emphatically than in the past to make all decisions on their own, which seem to be important to them, to really stand on their own feet and to bear more responsibilities.

Another component of the modified self-awareness among youth is the striving for more self-realization. Young people

strengthen their efforts to be active, to shape or move something, to change things that have been recognized as something important, and to finally improve them. They wish intensively to get more involved themselves, and to bear their own responsibility both for great and minor things.

A higher level of self-determination or self-responsibility logically tends to more co-determination or joint responsibility as well. These are corresponding components which represent a dialectic interrelationship.

I am convinced that this "axis syndrome" will create favourable conditions to understand the mentality change among our youth, and the large number of modified manifestations, particularities and conflicts underlying the social behaviour of young people in various fields of our everyday life in society.

Trends that occur in other needs shall only be outlined.

The need (or striving) for pleasure and excitement in life has grown. Young people more and more emphatically wish to enjoy their lives, to get more benefit from life, to be able of living "a full life", and look more actively for adequate opportunities, for exciting uncommon adventures. For example, to go on long travels, to encounter adventures, ticklish situations, to overcome social argument, to cause sensation in public or among friends, to gain respect, to enjoy love and sexual happiness to the full, to indulge in music, arts and culture - this can be an expression of the above need.

The need (or striving) for material values is more strongly marked among our youth. This can be seen (as already suggested) both

in the growth of utilitarian features inherent in the work motivation and partially in the vocational orientation, the search for secondary, avocational work, transactions with foreign exchange currency, and in other everyday behaviours.

The need (or striving) for informal forms of social contacts. Today young people prefer more than previously informal contacts such as friends, leisure or hobby groups, groupings where they can follow their interests and discuss their problems. Young people in our country are not hostile to collectives, they like to work in youth work teams. The majority of them feels happy in their schoolclasses, seminar groups, Free-German-Youth-(FDJ) groups if they feel their own person respected, and if their interests, problems, opinions, and aspirations are tolerated.

Although young people in the GDR typically strive for more privacy, they are not at all privatistically-minded. If they are accepted as they are, as individual beings, with their increased self-demands, and if they can "bring themselves in" or integrate with their interests and problems (self-realization!), they will be glad to belong to groups, whether these are informal or formal collectives.

It becomes evident that the "axis syndrome" of a "strengthened self-consciousness" affects the other needs listed here and influences their structures.

Furthermore, our research provides evidence that the mentality change outlined here involves all strata and groups of youth. Although, significant differences may occur between some strata and subpopulations in the manifestation of these or those mentality

characteristics or perhaps in the rate of change. It was not seldom that we discovered such differences .

Our longitudinal studies enabled us furthermore to prove that the change of mentality at any rate occurs before entering adolescence. Experience already made before adolescence is so decisive to the formation of changed mentalities as the generation theory presumes.

Adolescent experience surely exerts an influence, which we should not underestimate, in the sense that it (more often) reinforces or (more seldom) diminishes the mentality traits or mentality profiles already acquired.

The more dramatic the external events in individual or societal life (for example political progress or national crises), the bigger and the more lasting will be their effects on the mentality growth among young people. Single cases may produce ideological or moral conversions. But this does not suffice yet to prove a very limited sensitive period of determination around the age of 17. Mentality begins to change long before adolescence. Its basic structure is clearly defined at an early age by the living conditions and education within the family, by other immediate contacts and by the media. They establish a rather clear profile and a surprisingly stable determination during the first decade of their lives yet.

Notes about Causes of the Mentality Change among Young People in the DDR

While it is already difficult to define the concrete phenomena of

this mentality change precisely, it still is far more complicated to answer the question of causation in detail and with sufficient scientific affirmation.

So, I shall set out on a quite unstable ground here. Add to this that our literature rarely includes any differentiated preparatory work on this subject.

At first, it should be underlined that both the content-specific characteristics and, in particular, the concrete causes of mentality change have to be considered under their specific national conditions. This is the thesis to start from.

Although international comparisons find many analogies and corresponding basic trends, the (national) GDR-specific situation has a large influence and therefore is strictly to be observed.

Hardly anybody would be so naive to attempt searching for very few and special causes of the mentality change. There is no proper cause of mentality change, unless we mean the philosophical abstraction of the conditions of life in society as a whole.

It is important that a large number of complex factors associated with the actual societal life of men/populations is involved in, that is to say determines the formation and growth of mentality processes. These factors belong to completely different dimensions of societal reality (ranging from foreign policy to family life), but they are interrelated with each other. Mentality changes are always effects of complex structures underlying societal factors.

The task of sociological research is to identify major factors and essential components of these determinating structures and

finally the continuous improvement of their theoretical and empirical analysis based on interdisciplinary cooperation.

Since we are at the very beginning of this path that leads to knowledge, as already admitted, I must content myself with rather general descriptions of some of these factors with influence on the current mentality change among our youth here. Many points cannot be mentioned for reasons of time and for other reasons.

I shall roughly subdivide global and specifically national factors here, although I know that global influences are always modified, split up and particularly treated by the internal conditions of national systems.

Global Factors of Influence

Today every country more than ever depends on the global processes of development, on world economy, world policy, and world culture. This fully applies to the German Democratic Republic, as a relatively small country in the centre of Europe, which borders on the two large social systems and is characterized by important cultural traditions of Middle and Western Europe and by its particular situation in relation to the Federal Republic of Germany, a country poor in raw materials and therefore much left on imports and an intelligence-intensive production.

From this enormous interlacing let me only pick out:

- the process of the scientific and technological revolution
- The further deepening and yet accelerating processes underlying the technological change of modern productive forces has massive "social consequences" as we all know, this means in par-

tiular consequences for mental and cultural, information-specific, and educational progress, for the mentality development of man.

Scientific-technological revolution increasingly affects the everyday life of people and thus their thinking, evaluating, their educational and vocational careers, leisure, their life careers. In direct, but more indirect (or mediated) ways it certainly has much influence on the growing differentiation and individualization of human life.

Scientific-technological revolution should be conceived as the basic process of socio-cultural progress, but without falling into vulgar reductionism.

On the contrary, just today the very point is to emphasize one's own contribution, that of cultural and political factors, and the impact of mental currents on human mentalities.

- the global cultural process of individuality growth

It is absolutely certain that a process of individuality growth has taken place despite of historical variation, counter-currents, set-backs, and extreme collective orientations in this or that country in the course of centuries since the period of Renaissance.

This mental and cultural process has made a large step forward in many countries, among them the GDR as well. This is reflected in the lifestyles of man, precisely speaking at work (work motivation!), leisure, in family life (liberal conceptions in sexual life, partnership and child education), but also in higher aspirations for societal co-determination (democracy development!). The fundamental change undergoing adolescent

self-awareness, the so-called "axis syndrome" with components as for instance recognition of an increased self-acknowledgment, self-determination, self-realization surely roots in this global process (which is determined by many layers, and treated under conditions specific to the GDR). This global process should be even more thoroughly analysed in cultural and theoretical terms yet.

changes in the socialist countries

The policy of change, perestroika and glasnost initiated by Gorbachev as well as the critical events broken out in the Soviet Union thereafter, and the events in Poland and Hungary has had great influence on the change of mentality among our youth over the last years. This primarily applies to the political and ideological value orientations and motivations, life orientations closely connected with them.

- neighbourhood and confrontation with the FRG

The existence and the level of the economic and political development of the second German state surely is of great importance to the mentality change in the GDR. The reason primarily is

- a common history until 1945 (national culture and mentality up to that time, the same language)

- close connections with relatives, contacts

- strong influences through the mass media that are often used; thus Western values and lifestyles may be delivered to the homes without any charge every day and may become effective

- the economic power, the high living standard, the attractive opportunities for ways of living. This is very attractive.

The FRG is a comparative country to many GDR-citizens, younger ones included, a country to refer to for comparison. Millions of people have already seen it with their own eyes.

National Factors of Influence

I have already pointed out that the causes of the mentality change in the GDR require first of all an analysis of the internal factors and socio-cultural processes (but their interlacing with international processes should always be kept in mind in doing so). Strictly speaking, the mentality change cannot be explained without considering the socialist changes during the last 40 years. In this place I shall only point out some key-words

- the creation of the socio-economic foundations underlying the organisation of society and state in socialism,
- the spreading of socialist ideology and values such as peace, friendship, solidarity, collectivity,
- in particular the realization of social, cultural, educational, and youth policies.

I mention all this not because I might wish to draw a picture of a safe and sound, and perfect world, but because particular national mentality structures, so to speak a mentality in the colours of the GDR, developed on this basis as years passed by. Current mentality processes, both the positive and the difficult ones, need this contemporary perspective to be understood.

The mentality change has its unmistakable GDR-characteristics. It cannot simply be interpreted as a somewhat late "postmaterialist push of value change" of the Western countries, even though

it comprises some of the features observed there, but as we know in completely different structural relations. Neither can we equal it to mentality changes in the Soviet Union, Poland, Hungary, Bulgaria, or in other socialist countries. In this place I shall emphasize only a few internal facts of the GDR which in my opinion have a great share in determinating the processes of change undergoing self-consciousness, that is to say the "axis syndrome" of the mentality change.

- the high educational level of our youth

Our young generation disposes of a relatively high educational level, especially in the field of intellectual abilities (which was proved by international comparative studies using intelligence-diagnostic procedures).

This is an outcome of our ten-year-schooling system, precisely speaking of the polytechnical secondary school whose educational principle is to develop autonomous and creative thinking among pupils as you know.

It goes without saying that intellectually capable young people, who usually are open-minded to problems related to their lives and their social environment, need much autonomy and deciding on their own.

A general point is: The greater thinking competence and education, the stronger is the need for autonomy and self-determination.

Our social and youth policy grants young people equal chances of education and vocational training in dependence on their individual achievements at school, university, and vocational training.

It guarantees them the right to get a job, payment according to the output, helps in the search for a flat of one's own, and supports the development of their lives and their integration into society due to special socialization strategies covered by youth promotion plans.

Young people therefore possess a very distinct security awareness and positive future orientation with respect to their individual life career from an early age on. They do not expect or experience vocational or financial insecurity in life.

Naturally, this affects their self-consciousness. Feeling this security influences their self-confidence and independence, makes them more pretentious and critical in relation to inexplicable demands of their social environment.

The increasing quantity of leisure and especially the growing variety of offers and opportunities for young people to spend their leisure time (increasing plurality of the media, greater mobility through motorization, more youth-specific institutions, etc.) obliges them more and more to make their own decisions and their individual choice concerning the large variety of offers, which already begins in childhood.

They must learn early how to organize their own leisure menu. Today, selective and decision-making competence is demanded objectively earlier and far more often than decades ago.

This everyday experience of always choosing alone from a growing number of variants or opportunities naturally directs self-awareness as a whole towards the "axis syndrome".

We must not overlook in this connection that a lot of information and interpretations is not concordant, but rather contradictory

and full of contrast, for example those of the GDR and FRG television channels.

Parents educate their children more in the sense of favouring partnership, and not seldom in the laissez-faire style from their early age on. Today children are much more allowed to have their say in discussion and decision-making in the family than in the past.

Parents themselves have changed (their mentality) and thus the style of children's education. They expect and often encourage their offspring to make individual decisions, and the pressure to conformity exerted by their close friends, at the kindergarten or in the classroom is another factor of massive reinforcement.

Due to the improved parental housing situation (the large majority of children has their own room with radio or/and TV set) it is always possible and often desired to stay alone, even if the other members of the family are at home. Thus contacts are less close, the children or adolescents may engage in their own affairs, follow their individual interests as they please.

Such material conditions inter alia stimulate the growth of the needs for self-decision/self-determination, and of the respective abilities or social competences.

